

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 PANAMA 04375 172049Z

72

ACTION ARA-20

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FM AMEMBASSY PANAMA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8280

INFO GOV PAN CANAL

USCINCSO

USUN 381

AMEMBASSY LIMA

AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

C O N F I D E N T I A L PANAMA 4375

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR PN

SUBJ: FOREIGN MINISTRY ADVISOR SPEAKS ON TREATY NEGOTIATIONS

REF: A. PANAMA 4235; B. PANAMA 4120

SUMMARY. PANAMA CITY NEWSPAPERS HAD FEATURE STORIES AUGUST 17
PORTRAYING OPTIMISM ON CANAL TREATY TALKS. JORGE ILLEUCA, OF
GOP NEGOTIATING TEAM, WAS QUOTED AS SAYING "HIGH LEVEL
RAPPROCHMENT" HAD BEEN PRODUCED, BASIS OF WHICH WAS REAFFIRMATION
BY USG THAT 1903 TREATY SHOULD BE ABROGATED. PRESS TREATMENT
CONTINUES GUARDEDLY OPTIMISTIC LINE OF PAST MONTH. END SUMMARY.

1. GOP CONTROLLED CRITICA AND MATUTINO CARRIED FRONT PAGE
FEATURE ACAN-EFE ARTICLES QUOTING FROM SPEECH MADE JORGE
ILLUECA, ADVISOR TO PANAMANIAN FOREIGN MINISTRY ON CANAL
TREATY MATTERS, IN PRESS CONFERENCE HELD IN SAN JOSE AUGUST 16.
ILLUECA WAS ATTENDING MEETING ASSOCIATION OF POLITICAL SCIENCE
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 PANAMA 04375 172049Z

STUDETNS OF UNIVERSITY OF COSTA RICA. HE REPORTEDLY SAID:

"HIGH LEVEL RAPPROCHEMENT" HAD BEEN ACHIEVED BETWEEN U.S. AND PANAMA BY FOREIGN MINISTER TACK AND SECRETARY ROGERS. RAPPROCHEMENT WAS FOUNDED ON REITERATION BY USG THAT 1903 TREATY SHOULD BE ABROGATED.

2. ILLUECA ALSO SAID U.S. POSITION HAD UNDERGONE "RADICAL CHANGE" SINCE BEFORE SECURITY COUNCIL MEETING WHEN U.S. WAS "VERY RESERVED, SUSPICIOUS". HE ADDED THAT ONE COULD NOT KNOW WHETHER THE CHANGE WAS REAL AND PERMANENT UNTIL "THINGS FIRMED UP". ILLUECA EXPRESSED PANAMA'S GRATITUDE TO COSTA RICA FOR ITS SUPPORT DURING THE SC MEETING. HE COMMENTED FAVORABLY ON NOMINATION OF AMBASSADOR BUNKER AS CHIEF NEGOTIATOR SAYING, "HIS DIPLOMATIC ABILITIES, THE FIRMNESS OF HIS WORD AND EXPERIENCE, (ARE) GOOD INDICATION THAT THEY DESIRE TO ACCELERATE THE NEGOTIATIONS".

3. LA ESTRELLA AND SISTER STAR AND HERALD AUGUST 17 ALSO HAD FEATURE AP STORIES DATED WASHINGTON CITING USG SOURCES AS SAYING U.S. WILL BE PREPARED TO RESUME CANAL TREATY NEGOTIATIONS WITH PANAMA WITHIN THREE WEEKS. ARTICLES STATED THAT IT WAS BELIEVED, THOUGH NOT CONFIRMED, THAT WHITE HOUSE HAD LINED UP ELLSWORTH BUNKER AS CHIEF NEGOTIATOR. ALSO, U.S. OFFICIALS WERE DESCRIBED AS BEING DISGUSTED OVER RECENT PANAMANIAN "DENUNCIATION" (REFTEL A) OF U.S. FOR DELAY IN RESUMPTION OF TALKS. ACCORDING TO ARTICLE, U.S. OFFICIAL SAID DELAY WAS DUE TO RESIGNATION OF AMBASSADOR ANDERSON AND "U.S. WILLINGNESS TO RESUME NEGOTIATIONS SOMETIME AFTER SEPTEMBER 1 HAS BEEN COMMUNICATED TO PANAMA. PANAMA IS FULLY AWARE OF OUR POSITION." REMAINDER OF ARTICLE WAS REPEAT OF BACKGROUND INFO.

4. ALTHOUGH FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIALS HAVE BEEN SPEAKING ON U.S.-PANAMANIAN RELATIONS ONCE EACH WEEK IN SEMINAR OF GENERAL INFORMATION FOR PUBLIC EMPLOYEES SERIES, THEIR STATEMENTS HAVE NOT RECEIVED PUBLICITY, EXCEPT THAT REPORTED PREVIOUSLY (REFTEL B). FOREIGN MINISTER TACK GAVE SPEECH ON TREATY NEGOTIATIONS BEFORE PANAMANIAN SOCIETY OF ENGINEERS AND ARCHITECTS (SPIA) BUT WAS NOT QUOTED IN PRESS THOUGH SUBSEQUENT LETTER DATED AUGUST 2 FROM SPIA PRESIDENT CESAR P. SAAVEDRA TO TACK WAS PUBLISHED. IN LETTER SAAVEDRA URGED GOP CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 PANAMA 04375 172049Z

NOT TO SIGN TREATY PREJUDICIAL TO PANAMA'S NATIONAL DIGNITY BECAUSE OF ECONOMIC PRESSURES AND RECOMMENDED INSTEAD "POLICY OF WAITING" EVEN THOUGH THIS MEANT SACRIFICES FOR PANAMANIAN PEOPLE.

5. OTHER TRAVELING PANAMANIAN OFFICIALS HAVE ALSO BEEN QUOTED RECENTLY. NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION MEMBER ARISTIDES ROYO WAS QUOTED AS SAYING IN PERU THAT RECOVERY OF

SOVEREIGNTY OVER CANAL WAS PANAMA'S TOP PRIORITY (BEING REPORTED SEPARATELY). TORRIJOS' SISTER, PROFESSOR BERTA TORRIJOS DE AROSEMENA, WHO ATTENDED 14TH PAN AMERICAN CONGRESS ON CHILDREN IN SANTIAGO, CHILE, WAS QUOTED BY EFE RELEASE AS SAYING PANAMA WAS ENGAGED IN A STRUGGLE TO ATTAIN ITS DIGNITY ON "NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL SCALE". MAIN PART OF INTERVIEW CONCERNED ACHIEVEMENTS OF PANAMANIAN REVOLUTION WITH PARTICIPATION OF WORKERS, STUDENTS AND WOMEN. ON PANAMA CANAL SHE SAID, " TO SEE COUNTRY BROKEN IN TWO IS TO HAVE A BROKEN HEART", AND THAT PANAMA SHOULD HAVE CONTROL OF HER PORTS AND NATURAL RESOURCES WHICH WERE UNDER CONTROL OF CANAL ZONE. SHE APPARENTLY MADE NO REFERENCES TO TREATY NEGOTIATIONS.

6. COMMENT. ILLUECA'S STATEMENT IS CONTINUATION OF MODERATE AND GUARDEDLY OPTIMISTIC LINE PANAMANIAN OFFICIALS AND PRESS HAVE MAINTAINED DURING PAST MONTH ON CANAL TREATY MATTERS. ILLUECA'S LINKING OF CHANGE IN U.S. ATTITUDE TO SC MEETING IS FURTHER INDICATION GOP IS SETTING DOMESTIC STAGE FOR CLAIMS OF VICTORY FOR ITS POLICIES WHEN NEGOTIATIONS ARE RESUMED. SAYRE

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